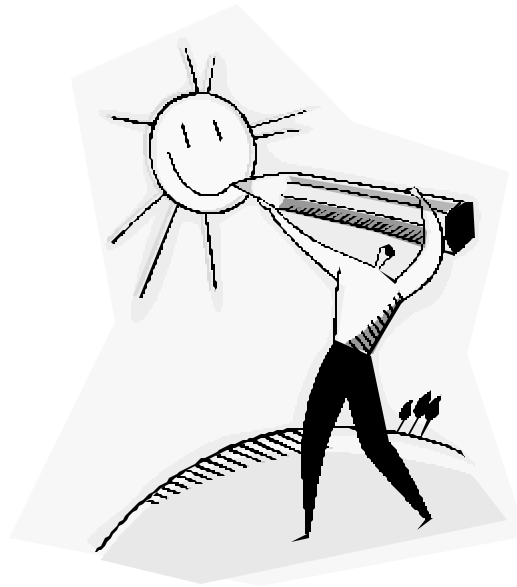# Building and Sustaining Collaboration

Kristen West, CHOICE Regional Health Network

Or, "how did the belly-dancer get the porter to carry their luggage?"
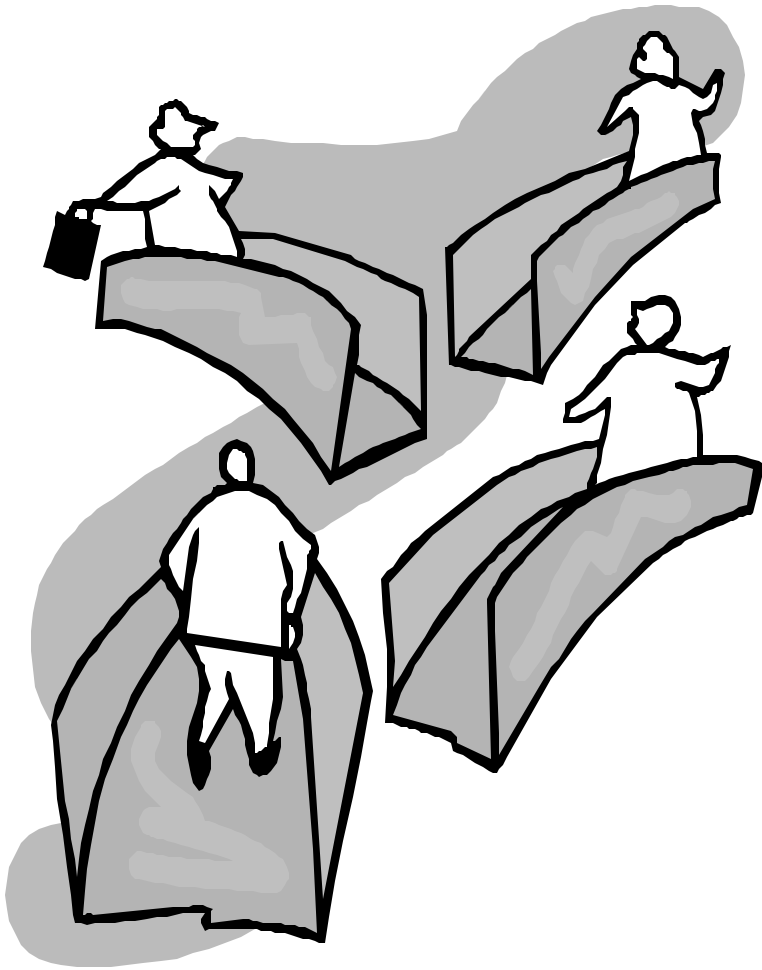
Answer: "Collaboration: Because he offered or they asked"

Building collaboration is the art of…

Common sense-making among people and organizations who see themselves as different for functional, power-based and visible reasons

Why Build Collaboratives? – They're the Future

- **Political Will:** To solve the problems we face as a society it will take a critical mass of practical wisdom and shrewd minds who are willing to collectively exercise the power of deliberate action to further a particular vision.

- **Dispersed Ownership:** To affect meaningful change, we need to hold a common purpose long enough to leverage decisions and resources among separately owned organizations.

- It's fun and rewarding!

To build a collaboration, you need to know…

- Your authorizing environment
- Who are these people and why are they doing what they're doing
- How to build bridges among people anchored to their turf
- How to assess your stakeholders and move them into the collaboration as a strong partner
- Who am I and what is my leadership role

Leaders of successful collaborations have some common characteristics

- **Can articulate hope for the future and a belief that collective action can shape this future**
    - Define themselves.
    - Fire in the belly.
    - A bit fearless.
- **High tolerance for ambiguity:**
    - Can see strategy amidst chaos.
    - Productive muddlers.
- **Can inspire and motivate others to take leaps of faith:**
    - Creative.
    - Generous in spirit.
    - Trust-worthy.
- **Easily absorbs vast quantitative and qualitative info and uses it:**
    - Confident decisions.
    - Innovative.

- **Strong emotional IQ:**
    - Know your feelings and use them to make decisions you can live with.
    - Persist in the face of setbacks in order to pursue goals.
    - Empathy -- read other people's emotions without their having to tell you what they are feeling.
    - Harmony -- able to articulate the unspoken pulse of a group.

The Collaboration will only be as strong as the relationships among the partners

- To build relationships you need face time
- Have someone with a good relationship facilitate entrée to new partners
- Dialogue and shared frameworks are necessary to build trust
- Trust is necessary before you try to "move" a partner to a different place in their thinking or acting
- Partners of the collaboration need to:
    - Be a non anxious presence so that others say what they really think – feedback is data!
    - Operate from a place of generous assumptions about one another
    - Be predictable (say what you're going to do and do what you say)
    - Give advance warning for controversial actions

Define your authorizing environment

- Who is sponsoring the collaboration
- Who gets credit/branded for collaborative actions
- How will decisions really get made
- Who can make commitments for their organization
- Who benefits
- Who is not involved that needs to be

How do you decide who is important to involve?

- They usually tell you!
- You need investors
  - What they want will set "an" agenda
- You need leaders
  - Busiest people
  - Invested in status quo
- Don't underestimate the need for lots of followers
- Do simple stakeholder analysis by NAME
  - Key, important or helpful
  - Champions, supporters, fence-sitters or detractors

Stakeholder Assessment Tool: An Example

Type	Org Contact	Priority	Starting Position	Current Position	Out-standing Concerns or Q's	Strategy	Lead	Personal or Org Interest
Hospital	Bob Bond	Key	Fence sitter	Detractor	I don't understand 100% Access	▪Elevator speech to med staff ▪+ PR for new ER	Kayleen Faulk	New ER Better relationship with Dr.s
Physician	Kevin Albrecht	Important	Supportive	Champion	Lack of med society resources	▪Shadow staff med society ▪Write grants		Visibility among peers
Public Health	Sherri Spoor	Key	Detractor	Fence Sitter	It not possible to achieve 100% Access	Ask to develop campaign messages		Advocacy for public health $'s
Employers	Jonnel Perkins	Helpful	Champion	Champion	Time and focus	Turn loose to speak to employers		Exposure to small businesses

Inspire partners to participate in the collaboration

- Enlist the assistance of credible sponsors
- Have a compelling vision that will resonate with multiple audiences
- Approach natural partners first
- Break vision down into practical steps and short-term benefits using their words
- Don't underestimate the fear of not participating

- Don't push – keep doors open, or at least revolving
- Be highly responsive and neutral
- Listen (spoken/unspoken)
- Leave the first meeting with something you'll do for them
- Work your stakeholder analysis
- Know what it will take for someone to become involved

Get partners engaged in the work of the collaboration

- The process is important and must work for the people involved.

- You don't need a perfect process – you need to get started. GO!

- Ownership will occur when people see that their contribution counts.
  - Maturation happens when it's more about "here's how I can help" than it is about "what is this going to do for me."

- Need a balance between good staff work and broader investment by having others "do".

- Get them actively talking to each other, especially if it's arguing.
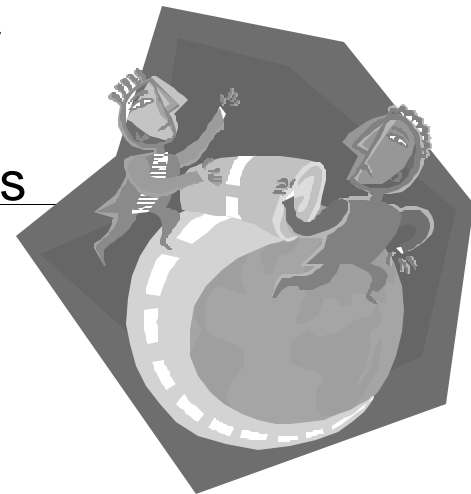
Sustaining collaboration is hard work

- Be a social entrepreneur
  - Acknowledge that you're running a business
  - Do business planning
  - Know who benefits and how from the work
- Make the business case for collaboration
  - Calculate return on investment
  - Show the value of sharing vs. negotiation
  - Articulate the competitive advantages of working together
- Have clear and integrity-based rules of engagement and enforce them
- Be accountable
  - Tie performance measures to business planning
  - Monitor progress on outputs and outcomes quarterly
  - Know when something isn't working and make mid-course corrections
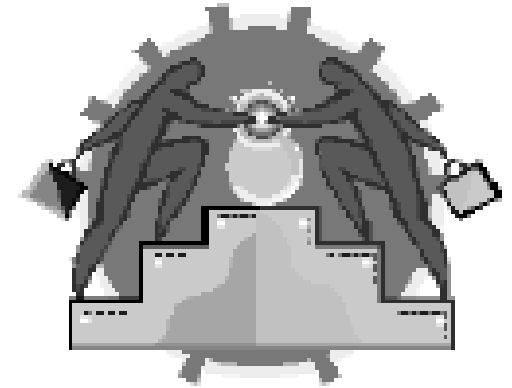
Checklist for Sustainability

- Formal partners are growing
- Dispersed ownership doesn't slow down decisions and actions
- Able to attract new and diverse revenue
- Savings are reinvested in the community not just partner organizations
- Who owns what is fuzzy and it doesn't matter
- Evolution of initiatives show bigger changes and greater risk-taking among partners
- The value of the collaborative becomes a cultural belief
- Others want to know how you do that thing you do